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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRASILIA 001300

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL ON AHMADINEJAD, IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM, AND VISAS

REF: A. BRASILIA 1170
[¶](#)B. BRASILIA 1112
[¶](#)C. BRASILIA 773
[¶](#)D. BRASILIA 658
[¶](#)E. BRASILIA 477
[¶](#)F. BRASILIA 387

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Classified By: Charge D'Affaires Lisa Kubiske for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶](#)1. (U) Paragraphs 2 and 8 contain Mission Brazil action request.

[¶](#)2. (C) Summary and Action Request. With Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's November 23 visit approaching, President Lula has not adopted a position on the IAEA (P5 1) Geneva proposal or the Iran nuclear program as a whole, although Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE or Itamaraty) senior officials praised the P5 1 proposal and assured that Brazil would quietly support sanctions against Iran in the UN if IAEA-based talks fall through. Iran and Brazil are expected to sign several bilateral agreements during the visit, including an agreement to waive visa requirements for holders of diplomatic passports traveling on orders. Senior officials in MRE and the President's office say that Lula will discuss human rights issues with Iran, largely because of pressure from Brazilian civil society, but is only prepared to talk about the nuclear issue in general terms. MRE acknowledged worries that Lula and his advisors will be publicly seen as overly friendly to Iran during the visit. Ahmadinejad's visit will follow closely on the heels of visits by Israeli President Shimon Peres (Nov. 11) and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (Nov. 14). Under Secretary for Political Affairs Vera Machado explained to the Charge d'Affaires on October 28 that Lula believes, based on his previous conversations with President Obama, that his communication with Iran and the Middle East will be appreciated by the USG and western governments. Lula and his inner circle of advisors do not appear to fully grasp the negative feedback that will be created by the Iran visit, nor the potential policy complexities involved with hosting so many regional leaders at once. Action Request: As Brazil makes clear that it will continue to pursue a more active role in the Middle East, Mission renews its request for a Washington regional expert to meet with senior counterpart officials about Iran and broader Middle East issues. End Summary and Action Request.

Brazil and the IAEA Proposal

¶3. (C) In his October 27 and subsequent meetings with poloff, MRE Iran/Central Asia Desk Director Roberto Luis Pires Ribeiro da Silva praised the multilateral approach of the IAEA proposal made to Iran in Geneva, particularly the roles of Russia to enrich Iran's low-enriched uranium (LEU) fuel and of France to convert the LEU to fuel plates. He said that the inclusion of these two countries, rather than the details of the proposal itself, were noticed by President Lula and his advisors. Pires said no decision has been taken by the GOB at the executive level to endorse the P5 1 IAEA proposal, even though the regional and science/technology desks at Itamaraty have recommended official support. He believed that Iran would "half-accept" the proposal originally but would eventually agree to make a one-time transfer of 1200 kg of LEU. (Other senior officials at MRE were less optimistic.) Pires emphasized, as in previous meetings (ref A), that if talks fell through and sanctions against Iran were proposed at the UN level, Brazil would vote in favor -- but would be quiet about it. In a November 4 meeting, Presidential Foreign Policy Adviser Marcel Biato told the Charge d'Affaires that Lula would bring up nuclear issues with Ahmadinejad, recommending dialogue with western governments and reaching an IAEA-based solution, but has not committed to discussing P5 1 proposal specifics.

Ahmadinejad Visit: End of Visas for Iranians?

¶4. (C) The MRE Central Asia/Iran division is busy preparing for Ahmadinejad's November 23 visit. Pires said that the official agenda includes signing a series of pre-negotiated bilateral agreements, including an expected (but not yet finalized) agreement to waive bilateral visa requirements for bearers of diplomatic passports traveling on orders. In

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early November conversations, Pires and other MRE officials categorized as false October 27 Brazilian media reports that asserted, based on an interview with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alireza Salari, that Iran and Brazil would reach an agreement to liberalize bilateral visa rules for all passports, giving Iran in effect visa waiver status to Brazil. According to Pires, there has been and will be no attempt to adjust visa access for normal or official passports. Other bilateral accords to be signed include a general economic assistance agreement, a more detailed agricultural assistance agreement outlining exchange of Iranian petrochemical inputs and fertilizers for Brazilian technology, and several memorandum of understanding, most notably one between each nation's central bank. He characterized the agreements as "government to government," including nothing specific to Petrobras or other Brazilian companies that could fall under the Iran Sanctions Act.

Internal Pressure

¶5. (C) Both Pires and MRE Middle East I (including Israel, Lebanon, and Syria) Desk Director Claudio Cesar Nascimento, who spoke briefly with poloff on October 28, noted that Itamaraty and Lula were getting pressured on a near-daily basis by Brazilian religious and ethnic minority groups opposed to the Iranian government's activities. Brazil's Jewish community has employed their senior members within the President's party (PT) to advise Lula and his advisors against hosting Ahmadinejad. The Brazilian Baha'i community has also been very active and Syrian-Lebanese Christians have registered concerns on a more ad hoc basis. In response to public pressure, Pires said, Lula plans to press Ahmadinejad about release and treatment of Iran's domestic religious and political detainees -- including those arrested in the post-election demonstrations this summer. Pires nevertheless expressed concern Presidential Foreign Policy Advisor Marco Aurelio Garcia (who is especially close to Lula) would change the vanilla talking points and remarks being prepared by Itamaraty, setting the stage for the President to downplay

human rights concerns in the meeting or to make public comments about Iran and Ahmadinejad that could be misconstrued. He suggested that Garcia had already done this prior to Ahmadinejad's aborted visit in May (ref E).

Lula's Justification

¶6. (C) As November 23 approaches, several local media outlets have published articles critical of the planned Ahmadinejad visit, posing essentially the same question raised by the USG and much of the international community: Why is Lula insisting on cultivating relations with Iran? In an October 28 meeting with the Charge d'Affaires, MRE Under Secretary Vera Machado provided insight into Lula's thinking. Machado said that, during a brief discussion on Iran between Lula and President Obama at the July G8 Summit in L'Aquila, at which she was present, President Obama responded to Lula's comments about wanting to meet with Iran by saying he would appreciate anything Lula could do to be helpful. Lula has interpreted this to mean that the USG tacitly supports Brazil's efforts to engage Iran (and the broader Middle East) on key issues. According to Machado and other MRE officials, Lula has been most interested in raising issues such as detainee releases, human rights, and general questions. She confirmed that there is no indication that Lula is interested in discussing with Ahmadinejad the specifics of the IAEA Geneva proposal or Iran's activities in neighboring countries.

Handling all the Visitors

¶7. (C) Handling agendas will be a delicate matter for Brazil, given the competing needs of its visitors this month, which include Israeli President Shimon Peres (Nov. 11), Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (Nov. 14 or 15), and likely a rescheduled visit by Lebanese President Michel Sleiman after Ahmadinejad. According to MRE and the Israeli Deputy Chief of Mission, the Peres visit will feature signing of several bilateral economic accords similar to those to be signed during the Ahmadinejad visit. The Israeli Embassy is also pushing the Senate and Chamber of Deputies leadership for the opportunity to allow Peres to address both houses of Congress. Senior congressional staff told poloff that Chamber President Michel Temer and other key leaders were

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amenable to the idea and had received a green light (if not an endorsement) for the idea from the President Lula's office. It now appears that Congress will not grant the request due to concerns that Ahmadinejad, in particular, would have to be given the same forum (which MRE reports he has not asked for). Itamaraty had not been aware of the Israeli Embassy's request to Congress until early this week and has since sent signals that it would prefer that no visiting foreign leaders be given the podium in Congress.

Comment and Action Request

¶8. (C) Despite growing contacts and a small number of experts on the Middle East in Itamaraty, the GOB as a whole still does not fully grasp the regional and multilateral dynamics surrounding Iran and the Middle East, and its frenzied effort to reach out to all players in the region is increasing the potential for missteps and misunderstandings. We believe the GOB is misreading the views and actions of the United States and other key players on these issues, even as Brazil wades purposefully deeper into the Middle East. The upcoming visits of Ahmadinejad, Peres, Shimon, and Sleiman, combined with a likely January 2010 trip by President Lula to the region, are likely to compound, rather than alleviate, these problems, as Brazil seeks to burnish its image as the country that can talk to all sides. Additional USG engagement, perhaps in concert with Britain, France, and other key international players, will be needed to press our

point of view and inform Brazil's. Mission renews its request (ref B) for a Washington Middle East expert visit to Brasilia to address senior-level counterparts in the President's office and Itamaraty to present our views. End Comment and Action Request.
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